

# Culture, Traditions and Policies: Chinese Perspectives on the Children Left Behind

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Abstract: Due to China's rapidly growing population, the government implemented a policy in 1980 to restrict couples from having more than one child. After the policy's implementation, tens of thousands of children and babies were given up for adoption, the majority of which were female. I aim to research this gender divide, looking at the impact of the varying levels of the policy's enforcement and the traditional Chinese values that place greater importance on boys than girls. Although there is a vast amount of scholarship regarding Chinese adoptees, little research has been conducted regarding the perspectives of people in China. I will fill this gap with a documentary regarding Chinese perspectives on adoption, the reasons for the abandonment of girls and what Chinese individuals wish to say to Chinese adoptees longing for a sense of understanding.

## **Topic of week 11**

### China's Population Growth

China's population has been exponentially rising since the 1960s, during which the population surpassed 660 million ("China"). China was not equipped to handle its populace. The depleting resources left people with hardly enough to survive (Lim; "Great Leap"). Beginning in the 1980s, the government began limiting childbirth.

There was mandatory IUD insertion for women who had already given birth and sterilization for couples who had a second child. Land was given to couples that promised to not have a child while they tended the land. Women were forced to have late-term abortions and provinces were given sterilization quotas (Spence 650).

The One Child Policy, which stated that couples were only allowed to have one child, was officially implemented on September 25th, 1980 (Pletcher). The policy was not enforced to the same degree in all areas. It was strictly enforced in urban areas as opposed to more relaxed in rural areas (Eberhardt; Hesketh et al. 1171). Despite the illegality of abandoning a child, tens of thousands of babies were given up. Due to the number of abandoned children, China opened up its adoptions to foreigners in 1992 ("Adoption: China").

In the United States alone, there have been thousands of Chinese adoptions. From 1999 to 2016, there were 78,257 adoptions from China to the United States ("Adoptions by Country"). Chinese adoptees are often left with questions about their birth families (Hoppenhauer 3). What factors contribute to the decision to leave a child? What would their life have been like in China?

### Traditional Chinese Values

There is a stark divide between the number of orphaned females and males. Females constitute 86% of all adoptees from China to the United States between 1999 to 2016 (“Adoptions by Country”). This leads to questions regarding the intersection of Chinese adoption and gender roles.

China is a patriarchal society. In “Chinese villages, many people, when asked about their 'children' . . . will answer as if only sons count, failing even to mention the existence of daughters unless specifically asked” (Johnson 62). Especially in rural areas, patriarchal values persist (Selin 17). Women continue to be seen as caretakers, homemakers and mothers (Chow and Chen 72).

Traditional Chinese values stem from Confucian teachings (Shek 276). In China, the Confucian principle of filial piety, or *zhi*, remains important to this day (Shek 276). Attributed to the values of filial piety, sons are expected to have children, thus continuing the family name (Shek 276). A traditional saying, “bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da,” translates to, “among the three unfilial acts, childlessness is the most serious” (Shek 276). There are seven acceptable conditions under which a husband is allowed to divorce a wife, one of which is if the wife does not bear a son (Shek 276).

I will explore Chinese adoption by looking at the varying importance of filial piety, traditional gender roles and policy implementation in rural and urban areas.

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**S wuŋkpu'**

- I. Given the divide between the number of abandoned girls and boys, has Chinese culture and values influenced this gender divide?
  - A. Does the impact of traditional values vary between urban and rural areas?
- II. How have Chinese values and governmental force played roles in the decision to relinquish a child?
- III. How do Chinese people feel about adoption? What do Chinese individuals want to say to adoptees?
- IV. What is life like for young adult females in Huanggang and the surrounding, rural villages?

**Tgɛwɣf 'Y qtm'**

Although there are academic papers and personal stories about Chinese adoption, there has been little research on adoption from a Chinese perspective. For example, a study entitled “Parental Assessment of Behavior in Chinese Adoptees during Early Childhood,” explores the behavior of Chinese adoptees in comparison to the behavior of children who grew up with their biological families (Rojewski 79-96). In the book, *Cukcp'Co gtkecp'Ruŋej qɪqi {<Ewt tgpv' Rgtur geŋxgu*, the bicultural identity of Asian adoptees is analyzed (Alvarez et al. 345-358). Adoptee perspectives are explored rather than Chinese perspectives.

There is also a variety of personal narratives about adoptees. Some include, “In Search of Self, Chinese Adoptees Find Shifting Identities,” “Chinese Adoptees at Home in America,” and “Her Search for Her Mother Touches An Entire Chinese City” (“In Search”; Silverman; Cook).

These narratives explore the changing identity of adoptees and the emotions behind birth family searching. Still, these studies and narratives do not touch on Chinese perspectives.

In terms of media, films about Asian adoption also typically focus on the stories of adoptees. Such films include *Cf qrvf*, *cncFcp*, *Uqo gy j gt g'Dgvy ggp'* and *Vy kpwgt u'* (Lee; Maxwell; Knowlton; Futerman and Miyamoto). As can be seen, there is a lack of information regarding Chinese perspectives on adoption.

In terms of studies on traditional values in China, none of them look at the intersection between Chinese perspectives on adoption and the influence of traditional values. The article, "Filial Piety in Contemporary Chinese Societies: A Comparative Study of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China," concludes that filial piety is still valued in China, yet this study does not include research about the impact of filial piety on adoption (Yeh et al. 292). Another study concludes that females do not share the same power as men within the household (Yifei 20-21). Although it addresses gender roles, the study still does not comment on how gender roles impact abandonment numbers. Due to the information gap regarding the intersection of traditional values and Chinese perspectives on adoption and abandonment, I will focus my research on these areas.

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## **O gvi qf u'**

I will film a documentary as the culmination of my research.

### *Rt giko kvct f "kvgt xky u"*

There is a variety of interviews I need to conduct prior to visiting China. I will interview Dr. Robin Wang, professor of philosophy and chair of Asian and Asian American Studies at Loyola Marymount University. Due to her expertise in Chinese philosophy and culture, she is the perfect person to ask about how traditional Chinese philosophy impacts modern life.

I will also interview Man-Li Kuo Lin, founder of the Long Island Families with Children from China's Chinese Heritage and Language Program. Man-Li is versed in Chinese culture and adoption.

I will conduct Skype interviews with Charlotte Cotter and Laney Allison, founders of China's Children International, an online community for Chinese adoptees. Based on their experiences searching for their birth parents, I will question them about how they think Chinese individuals view adoption.

If possible, I would love to talk to Jenna Cook about Chinese adoptees exploring their identities and returning to China. Jenna was adopted from China when she was a baby. When she was in college, she decided to travel to China to begin her search. After placing an advertisement in a local newspaper, tens of families came out to say that she was their daughter (Cook). Specifically for Cook, how have her experiences meeting over 50 Chinese birth families shaped her understanding of the perspectives of birth families?

Vt kr 'ʌq'Dgklkpi . 'Ej kpc "

I will visit the China Center of Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA), which oversees the welfare of orphans, to talk to them about what they do and acquire statistics about adoptions in specific provinces and cities in China. I also hope to meet with the directors of the Children of Uncle Sun, which is a program based in Beijing that helps adoptees learn about Chinese culture. I will ask them about Chinese perspectives on adoption."

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Vt kr 'ʌq'J wcp i cpi . 'Ej kpc 'k'vj g'J wlgk'Rtqxkpeg"

I chose Huanggang because it is a small city with surrounding rural areas so I can easily move between urban and rural areas to conduct my interviews. The One Child Policy was strictly enforced in the province of Hubei so I hope to explore how and if governmental implementation methods impacted abandonment numbers (Eberhardt).

My first stop in Huanggang is the Huanggang Social Welfare Institute. I would like to interview caretakers. In the city of Huanggang, I will interview regular people and birth and foster families about their feelings about adoption, traditional values and enforcement of the One Child Policy. I also plan on visiting the rural villages surrounding the Huanggang urban area and ask the same questions.

**Gzr gev f 'Tgwmw'**

I expect to create a 15-30 minute documentary to serve as my thesis film.

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October 2017.

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**Dwf i gv'**

Ckhtg"

\$5700 (3 Passengers) (Flight from NYC to Beijing, Beijing to Wuhan and Wuhan to NYC)

I am including three passengers because along with myself, I hope to have a translator, preferably one of my friends who speaks Chinese, as well as someone to help with filming. I would need air transportation from New York City to Beijing, Beijing to Wuhan and Wuhan to New York City.

I tqwpf "Vt cpur qt v kqp" y kj kp "Ej kpc"

I would require transportation from Wuhan to Huanggang which would be approximately \$35 USD.

Ceeqo o qf c kqp"

Beijing \$1500

I will need a hotel for 10 nights in Beijing. This amount of time will allow me to go to the China Center of Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA). It's address is Sun Light International Plaza No. 16, Wang Jia Yuan Lane, Dong Cheng District, Beijing, China 100027. I will also have time to go to the Children of Uncle Sun to talk to and interview the directors of the program. I also hope to conduct other interviews within Beijing. With taxes and applicable fees, the cheapest hotel around the Dong Cheng District is priced at around \$1,500 USD for ten nights.

Huanggang \$2000

I hope to stay in Huanggang for 15 days. I will need more time than in Beijing to interview people within the city and the rural areas. Also, I want to visit the Huanggang Social Welfare Institute. The cheapest hotel in the Huanggang area is around \$2000 for 15 nights.

Ej kpgug'Xkuc'Equmu'

3 People \$420

Xkf gq'Gs wkr o gpv'

Ideally, I would be able to use some of the equipment from LMU's film school. If I am unable to do so, I do have a DSLR that I could use for filming. Still, I do not have access to a microphone or lighting equipment. For budget wireless microphones, prices average around \$350. A basic camera light averages around \$50.

I hu'igt'Kvgt xkgy ggu'cpf'Otrj cpci gu'

\$150

Often, gifts are given to the directors of the orphanages upon visiting. As incentives to participate in my documentary, I would like to provide my interviewees with some tokens of appreciation such as small souvenirs from the United States.

Budget		
Airfare for 3 people	\$5700	Figure 1
Ground Transportation	\$35	Figure 2 and Figure 3
Accommodation (Beijing) (10 Days)	\$1500	Figure 4 and Figure 5
Accommodation (Huanggang) (15 Days)	\$2000	Figure 6 and Figure 7
Chinese Visa for 3 people	\$420	Figure 8
Video Equipment	\$400, unless I am able to borrow equipment from LMU School of Film and Television	Figure 9 and Figure 10
Gifts for interviewees and orphanages	\$150	N/A
Total Cost including Video Equipment Cost	\$10,155	

JFK-PEK Wed, May 16 | PEK-WUH Sat, May 26 | WUH-JFK Wed, Jun 13 | [Trip summary](#)

Multi-city trip  
3 passengers · Economy

Total price from **\$5,626**

Track prices · Monitor the lowest price for this itinerary, and receive price alerts and travel tips by email

Google may be compensated by some of these providers.

- Book with Air China, CheapOair, Orbitz  
Separate tickets - The 3 tickets in your itinerary must be booked individually \$5,626 [SELECT](#)
- Book on Google with Priceline \$14,595 [SELECT](#)
- CheapOair \$14,595 [SELECT](#)

4 more booking options

Figure 1: Airfare Costs for 3 people from NYC to Beijing, Beijing to Wuhan and Wuhan to NYC

## Taxi Fare Calculator in Wuhan

From

To

Estimated Trip Price	
Distance:	58.6 mi
Duration:	1 hour 18 mins
Start Price:	¥10.00
58.6 mi x ¥3.22 :	¥188.75
Waiting time (estimated 14.63 min):	¥9.75
Overall price (estimation):	¥208.51

Figure 2: Ground Transportation Cost from Wuhan Airport, the closest airport to Huanggang City, to Huanggang

Figure 3: Chinese Yuan to US Dollar Conversion Rate for Ground Transportation Cost

208 Chinese Yuan equals

# 31.45 US Dollar

<input type="text" value="208"/>	Chinese Yuan
<input type="text" value="31.45"/>	US Dollar

	<p><b>Hotel Cote Cour Beijing</b> ★★★★★</p> <p><b>Top Hotel</b></p> <p>Dongcheng 1-866-264-5744 • Expedia Rate</p> <p>✓ Free Cancellation</p>	<p>4.9/5 Exceptional! (20 reviews)</p> <p><b>In high demand!</b> <b>We have 1 left at</b></p> <p><del>\$241</del> <b>\$160</b> avg/night</p> <p>Sale</p>
	<p><b>Beijing Double Happiness Hotel</b></p> <p>★★★</p> <p>Dongcheng 1-866-267-9053 • Expedia Rate</p> <p>✓ Free Cancellation</p>	<p>4.6/5 Wonderful! (581 reviews)</p> <p><b>We have 5 left at</b></p> <p><del>\$161</del> <b>\$153</b> avg/night</p> <p>Sale</p>
	<p><b>Ji House</b> ★★★</p> <p>Dongcheng 1-866-272-4856 • Expedia Rate</p> <p>✓ Free Cancellation</p>	<p>4.2/5 Very good! (13 reviews)</p> <p><b>In high demand!</b> <b>We have 2 left at</b></p> <p><b>\$115</b> avg/night</p>
	<p><b>Beijing Sihe Courtyard Hotel</b></p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>Dongcheng 1-866-276-6393 • Expedia Rate</p>	<p>4.1/5 Very good! (295 reviews)</p> <p><b>We have 5 left at</b></p> <p><del>\$129</del> <b>\$90</b> avg/night</p> <p>Sale</p>
	<p><b>Old Beijing Square</b> ★★★</p> <p>Dongcheng 1-866-279-5332 • Expedia Rate</p> <p>✓ Free Cancellation</p>	<p>4.0/5 Very good! (41 reviews)</p> <p><b>We have 3 left at</b></p> <p><b>\$148</b> avg/night</p>
	<p><b>SonGy Hotel</b> ★★★ <b>New to Expedia!</b></p> <p>Beijing 1-866-281-6817 • Expedia Rate</p> <p>✓ Free Cancellation</p>	<p><b>In high demand!</b> <b>We have 1 left at</b></p> <p><b>\$113</b> avg/night</p>

Figure 4: List of Hotels in the Dong Cheng District, close to the building of the CCCWA in Beijing

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**Room 1:** 3 Adults, 1 Double Bed, Non-smoking  
✔ Breakfast included ✔ Free internet

**Contact name\***

**Country code\***

**Mobile phone number\***

Receive text alerts about this trip. Message and data rates may apply.

[Special Requests \(optional\)](#)



**1 Room:** Deluxe Double Room

**Check-in:** May 16, 2018  
**Check-out:** May 26, 2018  
 10-night stay

✔ Free cancellation before [Thu, May 10](#)

**No surprises!** Here's a breakdown of your price:

Room 1: 3 Adults	avg./night
10 Nights	\$102.38
Extra guest fee	\$24.03
Taxes & Fees per night	\$20.98

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**Sale!** Trip Total: **\$1,473.90**

Rates are quoted in US dollars.

👁 Almost there! **2 other people** viewing this property right now.

Figure 5: Beijing Accommodation Cost for 10 Days

**New Beacon Hotel** 5

Superior Twin Room

99 Huangzhou Avenue (Huangzhou Dadao), Huangzhou District

May 26 — Jun 10 (15 Nights)

x 2    2 single beds: 1.35 m

No Breakfast    Free Wi-Fi

Price Details

Total Prepay online **CNY 13,170**

Payment Currency **CNY**

Prepay online **CNY 13,170**

Figure 6: Huanggang Accommodation Cost for 15 days (This is the only available hotel for a 15 day period)

Figure 7: Chinese Yuan to US Dollar Conversion Rate for Huanggang Accommodation Cost



Entry & Validity	American Citizens	
Single Entry for 3 Months	USD 140	USD
Double Entry for 6 Months	USD 140	USD
Multiple Entries for 6 Months	USD 140	USD
Multiple Entries for 1 Year or 2 Years	USD 140	USD
Multiple Entries for 10 Years	USD 140	NA

Figure 8: Chinese Visa Cost per Person

